United Nations A/62/949

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 September 2008

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 49
Culture of peace

Letter dated 26 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that from 3 to 6 April 2008, the Royal Government of Cambodia hosted a regional conference on "Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony" in Phnom Penh, with the participation of South-East Asian and the Pacific countries.

The participants were very much encouraged by the comments made by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, in his keynote address at the opening of the conference, in which he endorsed principles of culture and peace and called for its spread to all the corners of the world. At the end of the conference an outcome document was adopted, entitled "Phnom Penh Dialogue 2008 on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony" (see annex, enclosure 2).

I would be grateful if you could arrange to have the present letter and its annex, including the outcome document of this important conference (see annex, enclosure 1), circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 49, "Culture of peace".

(*Signed*) **Sea** Kosal
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the United Nations

08-49844 (E) 150908

Annex to the letter dated 26 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Enclosure 1

Phnom Penh Dialogue 2008 on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony

3-6 April 2008

We, the participants in the Phnom Penh Dialogue 2008 on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony — from Australia, Brunei Darussalem, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam, gathered in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 3-6 April 2008.

This Dialogue builds on the commitments from previous dialogues in Yogjakarta in 2004, Cebu in 2006 and Waitangi in 2007.

We thank the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia for hosting the fourth Regional Interfaith Dialogue, and for providing the opportunity to appreciate the richness of Khmer cultural traditions. We also express our appreciation to the Governments of Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Philippines as co-sponsors of the Dialogue process.

We were very much encouraged by the comments made by His Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, as well as senior representatives from the host and co-sponsoring countries at the opening ceremony, "endorsing the principle of a culture of peace and calling for its spread to all the corners of the world".

In reflecting on our progress since Jogjakarta in 2004, two realities have encouraged us. First, many countries have already demonstrated significant progress in promoting stable and cohesive communities. Second, it is now clear that there are many practical initiatives at all levels of society that have been implemented and have reduced religious disharmony and engender cooperation towards the common good.

In this light we have agreed to commit ourselves to work towards the following in conjunction with governments and other sectors of society:

(a) multifaith dialogue and cooperation;

(b) peace as a sacred priority;

(c) increased participation by women and youth in interfaith dialogue;

(d) sharing with our communities successful examples of multifaith dialogue and cooperation and encouraging others to participate; and

(e) interfaith cooperation that addresses issues of critical community concerns in our region such as poverty, HIV, human rights, environmental issues and natural disasters.

Action plan

Relationships

1. We encourage governments to investigate possible mechanisms for maintaining regional interfaith activity between Dialogues.

2. We recommend further cooperation on the development of bilateral (country-to-country) programmes and projects, encouraging interreligious cooperation and understanding.

3. We encourage a stronger focus on dialogue within religions, including through intrafaith dialogue at national and regional levels.

Education and capacity-building

4. We recommend bringing educationalists together to develop curricula to promote interfaith understanding and human rights from religious perspectives.

5. We acknowledge the value of contemplative spiritual practices as an aid to promoting peace and resolving conflict.

6. We recommend the improvement of the religious education curriculum in order to help promote moderate religious views among youth.

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding

7. We recommend utilizing religious and spiritual leaders of standing to assist in resolving intercommunal conflicts and tensions within the region.

8. we recommend strengthening collaborative religious structures and networks for developing conflict resolution skills, practices and attitudes in areas of intercommunal conflict.

9. We recommend exploring the possibility of joint projects and activities, engaging people across faith traditions in areas of communal tension.

10. We recommend the sharing of case studies of effective examples of responding to violence.

Grass-roots initiatives

11. We recommend helping communities learn more about each other through informal settings such as community gatherings, festivals, sporting events or projects.

12. We recommend broadening of the dialogue process to include more of those not currently involved.

13. We recommend the development of mechanisms by which the role of women in interfaith activity can be further recognized, including through the establishment of women's interfaith forums and by providing training and support.

14. We recommend strengthening multi-religious youth networks across the region, encouraging cooperation, including through exchange programmes, camps and training programmes.

Media and promoting interfaith understanding

15. We encourage the media to balance freedom of speech with responsibility.

16. We will work to ensure a positive contribution by the media in building understanding between religions and faiths with particular regard to how biased and inflammatory reporting may foment division.

17. We recommend further training to assist faith leaders to communicate effectively with and through the modern media.

We recommend that this Dialogue process continue and that options for hosting the next meeting be explored.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 April 2008

Enclosure 2

Keynote Address at the Opening of the International Conference on "2008 Dialogue on Inter-Religious Cooperation for Peace and Harmony in Phnom Penh"

Phnom Penh, 3 April 2008

Your Venerable Monks,
All Venerable Religious Leaders,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished National and International Guests,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to join the opening of the international conference on "2008 Dialogue on Inter-Religious Cooperation for Peace and Harmony", which is an important dialogue for the region and the world today and in the future. Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and on my own behalf, I would like to express my appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Religions and Cults an the embassies of Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and New Zealand in the Kingdom of Cambodia for having jointly organized this conference and for providing both material and financial support to this conference. At the same time, I would also like to thank the Venerable Monks, religious leaders, especially all the 15 religious representatives, as well as Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, who have spent your valuable time to attend this conference to share knowledge, experience, findings and vision about the progress of all religions, which is widely regarded as a key for political stability, economic growth as well as stronger culture of peace and harmony for the region and the world.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to highlight that Cambodia has widely opened itself to allow the rights of religious beliefs to Cambodians as clearly stipulated in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In this regard, the Royal Government of Cambodia highly appreciates the role of religion and puts it in its national motto, "Nation, Religion, King", to enhance the achievement of parallel progress and joint development which are complementary. As we all know, that religion has contributed a lot to development and peace for the whole society. For instance, religion teaches us honesty, justice, good deeds and not to sin and shows us the way to liberate ourselves from miseries by staying away from dishonesty and evil acts from anger, violence and greed in order to make way to tranquillity of mind. Within such a deep sense, the Royal Government has put every effort to encourage and support all religious followers in Cambodia to continue their practices following the rule of each religious bible with mutual understanding and tolerance.

Belief is the root of culture and civilization of every race of each region in the world. Moreover, most religious conflicts of followers could be due to the different culture and civilization. Therefore, it encourages relevant authorities of countries in the region and the world to cooperate and unify together and taking all necessary measures to achieve peace and happiness for human beings and, especially, harmony among all religions. Indeed, dialogues on many of these issues have been organized in the international inter-belief conference in Asia-Pacific and national conference in Asia-Europe. Even though the topics in those international conferences are different, they have been organized for a single purpose — of ensuring peace and

happiness for all religions in the world with mutual understanding and tolerance. As we already know that, peace and happiness are the wishes of every human being and every nation.

At the same time, we need to also look at the inner beliefs and understanding of religious leaders as individuals and their followers with their daily livelihood. In this context, it means that religious belief and livelihood are interrelated. I think that the strengthening and expanding of the social sector through various means such as providing national education, informal education, health care and enhancing the livelihood of all religious followers as well as supporting the progress of every religion, will contribute to the achievement of a society which is free from violence, racism and discrimination.

In Cambodia, all types of religion have been revitalized at the same time as the event of 7 January 1979 when the country was liberated from the killing of the regime of Democratic Cambodia. In this aspect, I always encourage all religions to live together in harmony and jointly contribute to rebuild and develop Cambodia. These are the tasks which have been partly completed and are to be carried out by the Royal Government of Cambodia in the future.

It is true that 95 per cent of Cambodians are Buddhist followers and Buddhism is the national religion, but the country does not prohibit and limit the beliefs of other religious followers. In this context, it clearly manifests that all religious practices are being carried out smoothly all over the country, and so far they never caused any threat to the national security and public order. This is a result of the attention made by the Royal Government in the development of religious affairs and enhancing the religious sector to make progress by avoiding the violation of what I have suggested following the three points during the National Inter-belief Conference, which was recently held on 20 February:

Firstly, honour cooperation, solidarity and honesty based on the principle of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance in all circumstances for the sake of unification and harmony of the society.

Secondly, respect and practise your respective religious rules while respecting the rights of other religious followers by adhering to non-violence, mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

Thirdly, respecting personal freedom and religious belief is the value of each religion in its pursuance of the righteous path for national happiness.

Indeed, what is being raised here constitutes good experience for other countries in the region and the world [illegible]ke as a role model for uniting all religions harmonically and peacefully. At the same time, Cambodia would like to share all experiences from this work and support the inter-religious cooperation to realize harmony and peace.

In short, progress in all religions depends on the belief of their followers. In this regard, the Governments of all countries should gather all religious leaders and followers to jointly build and develop society to realize prosperity and harmony without discriminating against any religion and without violence. In this spirit, I would like to appeal to all religious leaders and followers to keep alive the culture of harmonious coexistence to develop our society.

Through the international conference on "2008 Dialogue on Inter-Religious Cooperation for Peace and Harmony", which is being held in the Kingdom of Cambodia, I hope the participants will discuss, exchange dialogue, and contribute their knowledge, experience, findings and vision to enable this inter-religious conference to achieve its plan and common principles which constitute the principles of culture and peace. At the same time, I would like to appeal to all religious representatives, especially religious representatives from the 15 countries who are here, to disseminate and mainstream the principles of culture and peace, specifically the will, spiritual, moral, and humanitarian, to all parts of the world; and may the culture of peace exist everywhere in the world.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to share three recommendations for your discussion, as follows:

First, we must support the delivery and absorption of global scientific knowledge in all societies and countries;

Second, we must support the sharing of culture, civilization and arts among all nationals in order to bridge differences and realize joint accomplishments;

Third, we must promote the participation of all religions in dealing with major global issues, including the environment, food security and poverty, etc.

Once again, I would like to thank all friendly countries for supporting this conference and related institutions for cooperating closely with one another to organize this conference. Your support and encouragement are the dynamic force that would enable future conferences of this kind. At the same time, I wish this conference to proceed smoothly and fruitfully for the benefit of the society and all human beings.

Finally, I would like to wish your Venerable Monks, religious leaders, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen the five gems of Buddhist Blessings; and may I now declare the opening of the "2008 Dialogue on Inter-Religious Cooperation for Peace and Harmony" conference.